



The Comic Book Story of Beer: The World's Favorite Beverage from 7000 BC to Today's Craft Brewing Revolution

Jonathan Hennessey (Writer) , Mike Smith (Writer) , Aaron McConnell (Artist) , Tom Orzechowski (Letterer)

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A full-color, lushly illustrated graphic novel that recounts the many-layered past and present of beer through dynamic pairings of pictures and meticulously researched insight into the history of the world's favorite brew.

Starting from about 7,000 BC, *The Comic Book Story of Beer* traces beer's influence through world history, encapsulating early man's experiments with fermentation, the rise and fall of Ancient Rome, the (often beer-related) factors that led Europe out of the Dark Ages, the Age of Exploration, the spread of capitalism, the Reformation, and on up to the contemporary explosion of craft brewing. No book has ever told the story of beer in a graphic format as a liberating or emancipating force that improved the life of everyday people. Visually riffing on abstract subjects like pasteurization, "original gravity," and "lagering," artist Aaron McConnell has a flair for cinematic action and demonstrates versatility in depicting characters and episodes from beer's rich history. Hand-drawn in a classic, accessible style, *The Comic Book Story of Beer* makes a great gift, and will appeal to the most avid comic book geek and those who live for beer.

The Comic Book Story of Beer: The World's Favorite Beverage from 7000 BC to Today's Craft Brewing Revolution Details

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From Reader Review The Comic Book Story of Beer: The World's Favorite Beverage from 7000 BC to Today's Craft Brewing Revolution for online ebook

Kimberly Carrington-Fox says

Un cómic sorprendente e interesante, destinado a los amantes de la cerveza y a toda la gente que sienta curiosidad por su fabricación. Mezclando humor y varios estilos de dibujo, vamos haciendo un recorrido histórico por la cerveza y su evolución (cómo se cree que surgió, dónde, etc.) hasta nuestros días, pasando por su modo de fabricación y la evolución que este ha tenido. A pesar de la cantidad de datos que se dan en ningún momento se me ha hecho pesado, el hecho de que sea un cómic y que el texto se vea apoyado por viñetas lo hace todo mucho más ameno. Gracias a él puedes entender por fin las diferencias que hay entre los distintos tipos de cerveza, lo que aportan sus diferentes componentes al resultado final, etc. Ha sido una lectura agradable y amena y me parece un libro ideal para regalar.

Sesana says

Informative, apparently well-researched, passionate, and nicely illustrated. This is everything I could ask for in graphic nonfiction. I have to imagine that this would be an even more exciting read for people who drink beer, especially those who are interested in craft beers. I'm neither, just a history nerd with a special interest in the history of food and beverage. For me, this book was largely an enjoyable read, densely packed with information without going off on too many tangents or including much that struck me as extraneous.

Garrett says

Delightfully refreshing, with a charming and strong finish, this Comic Book Story of Beer ranks high with all of our tasters...

...and you can see where I'm going with this. Seriously, though: packed with solid, documented history (and clearly marking simple assertions and conjecture when they occur) and lushly illustrated, this is one of the more fun histories of anything you will likely ever read.

Chelsey says

This review is based on an ARC copy from NetGalley.

Love love love this book!

There's no doubt that craft beer is super popular at the moment, so whether you're a beer drinker or just interested in pop culture, this book is for you. I know reading a book on the history of one specific thing sounds very dry and tedious, but this book never bored me and never felt like a chore to read. In fact, the illustrations and light tone of the book made it quite a delightful process!

I never new beer had such a rich history. This book introduces the many ways that beer has been influenced by, and in turn has influenced, so many cultures around the world. The production and consumption of beer has played a major factor in almost every historical era, and almost every continent on the planet. I highly recommend this to anyone interested in food history, history in general, or pop culture.

Stewart Tame says

The very existence of this graphic novel fascinates me. With the popularity of craft brews, I can see the general interest in the material, but why a graphic novel? I'm not complaining, just curious. I actually don't drink beer. Something about the basic flavor just puts me off. I've tried quite a few over the years, but never found one from which it was worth taking more than a polite sip or two. I do love comics though, and am especially happy to read one on a topic not normally associated with the medium. Beer is one of those commodities as old as civilization itself. The book gives the full history, from the earliest known archeological evidence right up to the current microbrew revolution. It reads pleasantly enough, and the artwork is well-suited to the task. The book's conclusion drags on a bit, partly due to the creators' decision to do their summary paragraphs in the form of beer labels, a conceit that's just a little too cute for its own good. All in all, not a bad book. I, for one, learned quite a bit about beer that I didn't already know.

Bert Heymans says

If you're interested in beer, this is great. You'll learn a lot without feeling like you're studying. However, if you're looking for a good story ... this will not scratch your itch. The comic style is nice but feels very chaotic because it wants to stay true to the subject matter. Recommended for every aspiring beek geek, but not so much for the comic lovers among us.

Nick Klagge says

I thought this was just OK. There's a lot of decent information about the history of beer, although most of it was already familiar to me. (I did, however, learn that there is now a certified Trappist monastery brewery in Spencer, Massachusetts!) Ultimately I didn't feel like the book did anything in particular to leverage the graphic novel format--the illustrations don't have a strong characteristic style, nor did they seem to tell the story any better than you could tell it in words. (But if you just used words, I guess it wouldn't have been enough for a book!) Finally, negative points for some unnecessarily sexualized illustrations of women (primarily of the Sumerian beer goddess Ninkasi).

Maria says

Many thanks to NetGalley and Ten Speed Press for a digital Advanced Reader Copy in exchange for my review.

Don't let the fun comics format lull you into thinking this is simply a light romp about drinking beer. Sure, that may be where it starts, but it is so much more. This is a history book, complete with footnotes and references (a few are in the book, but the full list of chapter notes can be found on their website) and an

index! Not only will you be entertained, you will be *educated*. This is a history class you wish you had in college. Like a good brewery tour, you will learn about the process of making beer, though an even more detailed account. But that's only the beginning.

My favorite way to study history is take a topic and follow it over time and throughout a geographic area, noting its cultural, religious, and economic impact. Beer makes a good such focal point because it has been around (in one form or another) for millennia, and is drunk the world over. (Also, I'm a big fan, and can be rather beer-snobish.) "Around the globe, people consume more beer than coffee, wine, and even Coca-cola."

Yet, the industry as we know it today, is vastly different than it has been over time. **"For nearly all of human history, brewing and serving beer has been an almost exclusively female enterprise!"** In ancient Summaria, the goddess of beer, Ninkasi, was worshiped for bringing this sweet nectar to the people. Only a few centuries ago, "Beer made a decided emergence from the kitchen. Brewing became a male business that generated manly profits. In large part, women were squeezed out. Ninkasi would have wept. The death knell had sounded for the millennia-old tradition of Alewives and Brewsters."

The basic ingredients of beer today have been the same for centuries, but the addition of hops was no less than revolutionary. The preservative qualities meant that consumption did not need to happen within a week or so, but the drink could be stored for longer times, and therefore shipped beyond the immediate brewing area. A current beer trend is to play with the flavors, varieties, and intensity ("an arms race with hops"), but hops is frequently an acquired taste. In fact, "for most of beer's history, adding hops would have been about as common and acceptable as using, say, asparagus, as a flavoring." (For those with allergies, beer without hops can be found, though you may need to do some searching.)

The second half of the book focuses on the US. Even the pilgrims were fans of beer, but the country (officially) went dry during prohibition. During that time, alcohol manufacturers had to find other products to produce ("some breweries turned to making ice cream"), but the smaller companies weren't able to last. After prohibition was repealed -- during your next argument over who may claim the Greatest President title, keep in mind that "newly elected President Franklin Roosevelt proposed to immediately reauthorize the manufacture and sale of beer" -- the largest surviving breweries got even bigger, and began to compete within a narrow flavor profile. "The desires of American drinkers led them to the same sort of product: inoffensive, mass-produced blonde, light-bodied, 'drinkable' lagers with little or no cumulative bitterness." American Lagers are often snubbed by today's craft beer drinkers, yet "remains the most widely consumed beers brewed in the world." It may be no coincidence that it pairs well with "hot dogs, peanuts, and cracker jacks." (And, perhaps, apple pie?)

Despite this being the vast majority of beer consumed today, there have always been those on the fringes who seek something different, something unusual. Even during the mid-1400s -- when Bavarian purity laws began to require that beer could be made with nothing other than water, barley, hops (and yeast) -- there were "home brewers [who] experimented with a variety of ingredients." Today's craft beer movement was born "in reaction to American Lager's ubiquity," and has exponentially increased the number of producers. Post prohibition, but before home brewing was again legal in the US, "American breweries fell to an all-time low of just 44 breweries." Just 36 years later, "there are over 3,200 breweries in the U.S. And more than 2,000 are reported to be in planning!" Craft-beer drinkers may be in the minority, but, along with modern home brewers, we are driving an expansion of the market. "Brewers discovered that some American drinkers were willing to pay top dollar for handmade, flavorful, premium beer," a fact which has led to us creating "a wider diversity of beers than any other nation in the world."

Since I working in a library where there is an amazing collection of reading material available at no charge (not counting late fees), I rarely buy books. But I enjoyed this book so much, it is one of my exceptions for this year. I picked up my own copy at a local bookstore so I could bring it to show off at Bier Klasse and

loan to friends. (I may even buy copies as gifts.)

Read this book with your favorite brew (perhaps one mentioned in the story), and with your next beer, raise your glass to Ninkasi!

The Beers (etc):

p 2 - PBR - can

p 9 - Bass - bottle

p 11 - Dogfish Head Chateau Jiahu - bottle

p 46 - La Lorraine - mug

p 60 - Classic examples of Lambics: Boon Oude Gueuze; Cantillon Rose de Gambrinus; Drie Fonteinen Kriek; Allagash Resurgam p 61 - several - bottles

p 65 - Classic examples of Trappist Dubbels: Wesmalle Dubbel; Chimay Premiere (red label); La Trappe Dubbel; Ommegang Abbey Ale; Sierra Nevada Oliva Abbey Dubbel

p 83 - Classic examples of Bocks: Einbecker Ur-Bock Dunkel; Spaten Optimator; Eku 28; Tommyknocker Butt Head Bock

p 88 - Fraunce's Tavern Extra Lager Beer - sign

p 94 - Classic examples of Porters: Fuller's London Porter; Samuel Smith's Taddy Porter; Great Lakes Edmund Fitzgerald; Anchor Porter

p 96 - Guinness - brewery

p 97 - Classic examples of India Pale Ales: Meantime India Pale Ale; Bell's Two Hearted Ale; Stone IPA; Bear Republic Racer 5 India Pale Ale

p 108 - Classic examples of Pilsners: Pilsner Urquell; Budweiser Budvar (Czechvar in the US); Victory Prima Pils; Bitburger Pils - classic example of a Pilsner; Brooklyn Pilsner

p 109 - Michelob, Labatt Blue, Heineken, Sapporo, Corona

p 112 - Budweiser - bottles

p 115 - Carlsberg Brewery

p 123 - Jacob Ruppert Knickerbocker - bottle

p 128 - Schlitz; John Haucks Beers; Pabst blue Ribbon

p 129 - Krueger's Finest Beer - can

p 132 - Groves & Whitnall, Barclay Perkins, Whitbread, Watneys - breweries

p 133 - Hamm's - ad

p 134 - Gabliner's Beer - can

p 134 - Lite Beer from Miller - bottle

p 135 - Classic examples of American Lagers: Budweiser, Miller, Coors

p 136 - Heineken - ad

p 137 - Anchor Steam - pint

p 138 - Watney's Party Seven bitter - party can

p 139 - Kruger's Bar

p 141 - CAMRA: CAMpaign for Real Ale

p 142 - Anchor - Christmas ale, hoppy ale, barley wine, porter

p 143 - several - bottles

p 144 - New Albion - label

p 146 - Classic examples of American Pale Ales: Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, Deschutes Mirror Pond Pale Ale; Dale's Pale Ale

p 154 - Bert Grant's Brewery Pub; The Hopland Brewery

p 155 - Pittsburgh Brewing Co. - bottlecap

p 156 - Samuel Adams Boston Lager - bottle

p 157 - Classic examples of Belgian Wits: Hoegaarden Wit; Allagash White; Blue Moon Belgian White

Ryan says

A VERY detailed history of beer. At times it was a little slow, but overall a good read. I learned a lot and the illustrations were superb.

Jon says

This graphic novel is a wonderful love letter to beer. The story is written with the passion that only a true beer lover can have about the subject. This is a very in depth history going from prehistory to today. While I wasn't worried because I'm the kind of guy that likes dry histories, I was pleasantly surprised at how engrossing and readable this graphic novel is. I honestly couldn't put it down. I loved how the author didn't only tell the history of beer in general, but went into the back stories of many different varieties of beer. This is a must read for any beer lover.

sologdin says

Someone sent this to me at the time I marked my fourth decennial, but didn't pop a card or return address in there, so they remain safely anonymous whereas I remain fucking forty. So, thanks, yo, whoever you are!

As I don't know anything about brewing, I can't comment on the presentation of the production process or the history of different varieties (lambics, doppel, porter, &c.). Cool, though, that beer does in fact have a history. (I imagine there must be an Althusser of brewing out there who has said that "Beer has no history," however.)

Amusing, the presentation of the ancient history of beer, wherein, say, the bloodlust of Sakhmat is assuaged only because the Egyptians offered her a cold one. To think mathematically about that, it must mean that beer may substitute in for blood, which makes all'y'all beer drinkers (I'm more of a wine drinker) basically equivalent to vampires. Hemophages. Gross!

Mark says

<http://www.unshelved.com/bookclub/201...>

<http://edelweiss.abovethetreeline.com...>

<http://marklindner.info/bbl/2016/03/h...>

Daniel says

I went into this one with high hopes, but it left me disappointed for four reasons:

1. It spends far too much time trying to prove to the reader how important beer is. I'd rather have more information and less of a sales pitch!
 2. The first section about early beer is mostly mythology along with stories that even the book admits are probably false! Why even have this in the book if you know it's probably not true?
 3. It feels like it's lacking in information. I'm not a beer historian, but if beer was so important to mankind in general, shouldn't there have been beer in parts of the world other than Europe or America? The book focuses solely on those locations, which seems too European-centric.
 4. The artwork can be rather weak at times.
-

Joseph R. says

Chronicling the history of beer (starting with pre-historical archaeological evidence and speculation), this book gives a quick but detailed view of the origins of beer-making by ancient peoples and follows through to the modern micro-brewing revolution in the United States. The book is entertainingly written and occasionally touches on major historical events when they are in some way related to beer (like Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch). The book also gives one page information sheets on all the major styles of beer (like pilsners, porters, IPAs, etc.), detailing their color, bitterness, and strength as well as good food pairings and readily accessible examples of each style.

I enjoyed the book--the style of illustration is fun and creative, as is the story telling. When new elements become part of the story (like hops), how those elements are used in brewing beer are described. The occasional digs against the Catholic Church, government authorities, and big business is a little off-putting. The author definitely comes from an "independent brewing is great/big brewing is bad" perspective (the publisher is from Berkeley!) and has an anti-establishment vibe that may not bother you but I at least noticed it. Otherwise it's a great read.

Mark Mcdermott says

This book is a decently thorough, yet concise, book on beer, not only its history, but on the science behind the brewing process. Hennessey, who has written other graphic "novels" on history, and brewer Mike Smith, sift through a lot of history and come up with some new ideas. Like the fact that we can only date the history of beer back to 7000 BC because that's when people started making it in pottery that can be found today; animal skins or wooden vessels from earlier times would have decayed away. The authors delve a bit further, too, into other aspects of beer history that are just touched on elsewhere: the fact that Rome and the Greeks were responsible for denigrating this universal brew only because THEY had wine grapes (and once Christian Rome fell to those beer-swilling barbarians, it was up to the far flung, beer brewing Irish monasteries to keep civilization going); the centuries-long role of women as primary brewers (and the first "public houses" were likely the homes where the lady of the house was good at her craft). I could summarize more "I never thought of that" bits, but let's move on.

Sprinkled through the book are one-page infographics of historic beer styles, like bock, Trappist dubbel, porter, IPA, American lager, American pale ale, and Pierre Celis' resurrected Belgian wit. These summaries do mention the current scholarship questioning the accepted origins for porter and IPA, the usual "A-Ha!" traps beer geeks like to find.

The book concludes with a section on the resurgence in craft brewing and an appreciation of the worldwide,

American-led, craft brewing renaissance. Like a good beer, it's filling yet easy to take, and keeps you coming back for more.
